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NOTES

THIRD REPORT OF THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE CENSUS

THE JOINT ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE CENSUS
REPRESENTING YOUR TWO ASSOCIATIONS RESPECTFULLY SUBMITS
HEREWITH THE THIRD REPORT OF PROGRESS

To the American Economic Association and the American Statistical Association:

We venture to remind you at the outset that this Committee was appointed at the Richmond meetings of the associations in 1918 at the request of the Secretary of Commerce. The president of each association was invited to designate members to form a joint committee to advise the Director of the Census concerning the many problems connected with the taking of the Fourteenth Census and the tabulation and publication of the results. The Fourteenth Census period as defined and provided by law covers three years, extending from June, 1919 to July, 1922. Your Committee, therefore, considers that its commission from you extends to the conclusion of the period specified, which will be practically coincident with the completion of the final reports of the Fourteenth Census, and expects to render a final report at the annual meetings of these two associations in 1922.

The year 1921 has been important in the affairs of the Census Bureau, since it includes the change of federal administration and also that of the Directorship of the Census. The new Secretary of Commerce, Mr. Hoover, promptly expressed his approval of your Advisory Committee, and increased its responsibilities. He had been fully informed of the Committee's work, and at once requested our assistance in connection with some of the problems which confronted him in the Department. In March, the Director of the Census under whom the work of this Committee began, resigned his office and the Assistant Director, Mr. William M. Steuart, was appointed to fill the vacancy. Fortunately, Mr. Steuart was a man skilled in census work after many years of service in the Bureau. As Assistant Director, he carried the burden of the advance organization and actual taking of the Fourteenth Census. The newly appointed Director of the Census was thus already familiar with such advantages as exist in committee coöperation, and at once expressed his wish for even closer relationship. It is a pleasure to report, therefore, that the cordial attitude of the Secretary of

Commerce and that of the Director and his associates have not only promoted the usefulness of your Committee but have made the task of counselling the Bureau increasingly agreeable and worth while.

Your Committee realizes that their assignment by the Secretary of Commerce to problems concerning the Department, which were remotely related or entirely unrelated to the census, is not strictly subject to report to the two associations. Such assignments the Committee naturally regarded as merely personal service. It is a fact, however, that the Secretary utilized for his own needs a going machine, and that that machine was yours. This, perhaps, justifies mentioning here that the Secretary of Commerce in September last entrusted to the Committee the task of preparing the plan of organization and agenda for the President's Conference on Unemployment. To prepare the way for and advise that important gathering, your Committee served as the basic organization. Aided by others, selected by the Committee or the Secretary, studies concerning the number of unemployed, the causes of unemployment and possible means of relief, were rapidly prepared and submitted to the Conference for consideration and action.

Whatever service resulted from this task may thus indirectly be traced to your creation of a joint committee to coöperate with the Director of the Census. This development, indeed, affords further and very interesting evidence of the way in which disinterested private organizations can be of service to the federal government under proper arrangements for coöperation.

Since our last report, nine meetings of the Committee, or of designated members of the Committee, have occurred in Washington, as follows: January 27-30, March 10-14, April 6-10, May 4-7, May 26-29, June 13-18, July 20-22, September 7-9, and November 17-19. Subcommittees have also met at other points: of these, three meetings were held in New York and three in Boston. Each member of the Committee thus has given liberally of his time, often at great personal inconvenience. The meetings of the full committee in most instances have been attended by the entire membership.

The meeting of March 10-14 was devoted almost exclusively to a discussion of the proposed methods of Congressional apportionment. At the request of the Chairman of the Committee on the Census of the United States Senate, the Director of the Census requested the Joint Advisory Committee to hold a session as promptly as convenient for the purpose of considering the various methods of apportionment proposed, with a view to making a report to the Senate Committee upon the merits of the methods submitted. Advocates of the various meth-

ods proposed were heard in person and also submitted memoranda to the Committee, which resulted in a brief report to the Director of the Census embodying the Committee's conclusions. For this meeting, the Director of the Census, at the request of the Committee, invited Professor Allyn A. Young, of Harvard, to sit with the Advisory Committee. Professor Young's assistance proved of such value that at the request of both the Committee and the officials of the Bureau, he consented to become a permanent member. Being a member of both of the associations represented, and a former president of each, your Committee has ventured to assume that their action would command the hearty approval of both organizations.

During the past year the Director of the Census has made increasing use of the Committee, submitting to it various problems arising in connection with census policy and with the preparation and publication of census results. The tendency of the Bureau noted in our last Report of Progress to utilize the Committee as an advisory court of appeal for decisions upon matters of census policy or statistical form has increased during the past year, and subjects about which there is doubt or difference of opinion within the Bureau are, for the most part, laid aside until they can be submitted to the Committee for its recommendations. In this way, policies which the two associations would desire to see established in the Bureau are being adopted.

It should be added also that as the members of the Joint Advisory Committee have come in closer touch with the officials of the Bureau they have been able, by comment and counsel, to be of assistance in many ways which do not appear in formal recommendations.

During the year twenty-six formal recommendations have been made dealing with practically all the branches of current census activity. The text of the recommendations is appended to this report.

Your Committee has continued earnestly to advocate the preparation of special studies, and has considered this as perhaps the most important of the recommendations here included. This policy was first outlined in one of the early recommendations, adopted two years ago, and has been consistently urged at intervals since that time. With the approaching completion of the main reports of the census, and the release of clerks and experts available for work upon such studies, the Director has approved the policy advocated by the Committee, and it is believed that the special studies outlined by the Committee in consultation with census officials, if successfully prepared, will prove a most important and gratifying departure in connection with census work.

Pursuant to this policy, the Advisory Committee has recommended

to the Census Bureau eighteen topics, the elaboration of which by supplementary tables and effective interpretation will be obviously timely and important. These topics will be found in Recommendation #76 appended hereto.

The Committee has named to the Director of the Census a number of men who in its judgment would be fully able to interpret census figures on the various topics upon which monographs were suggested. In certain cases, also, it has tried to induce men to undertake the preparation of monographs. In view of the inadequate sums which the Bureau can pay for such service it has naturally in many cases been impossible to secure the services of men recommended. This has been a great disappointment to the Committee and the Bureau. There is no branch of the Bureau's work which comes so closely home to the economists and statisticians of the country, and thus to the Committee aiming to represent them, as the work of interpretation. There is none in which the room for improvement is greater. If the Committee fails here it will fail in its most important task, and the Fourteenth Census will mean much less than it might mean, both to students and to the public.

In the Committee's judgment the members of these associations who have been or will be asked to assist in the preparation of monographs might well consider that the recognition by the invitation to prepare a section to be published by the Bureau over the name of the writer and included in a series like the census volumes, sure to be frequently consulted by scholars through coming decades and century, is no small part of the writer's compensation. The Census Bureau, in addition to a modest compensation, is ready to prepare tables proposed by the contributor and approved by it, to pay the cost of the necessary trips to Washington by the author for consultation with the Bureau authorities, and to make the resources of its clerical force available for the preparation of derivative tables. These are elements the importance of which should be carefully weighed.

Investigators are also reminded that any one working upon census figures in his study and without contact with the men responsible for their production is in danger of misinterpreting the figures and thus going far astray. This has happened frequently in the past and has tended to develop misunderstandings between the producers of statistics and the students who use them. On the other hand, writers conferring with the Census Bureau have a far better chance of producing trustworthy results and of developing a spirit of mutual understanding and coöperation, the value of which will continue long after the special piece of work has been done.

In the series of recommendations made during the past year there are two in addition to that relating to special studies to which your attention is especially invited: (#80) that relating to the determination of policy in constructing the schedule for the biennial census of manufactures, and (#90) that relating to the proposed census of mercantile establishments, sometimes called a commodity census. Both of the recommendations, which have been accepted by the Bureau, embody a definition of census policy, and your Committee is confident that its attitude reflects the prevailing opinion in these two associations.

Pressure was brought to bear by industrial interests to expand the scope of the biennial inquiry. But your Committee, while recognizing the value of the increased data desired, found the reasons for confining the inquiry to products and a few related questions so convincing that they advised the Director to prepare the simpler form of schedule.

A much wider problem of census policy was involved in the Director's request for a recommendation concerning a so-called commodity census.

There is a growing body of opinion, among business men as well as among statisticians, that the information which the census now gives with respect to the extractive industries and manufacturing should be supplemented by statistics of wholesale and retail trade. The problem thus suggested has a variety of important aspects.

For example, there can be no doubt that it would be greatly to our national advantage if we had means of securing adequate knowledge respecting stocks of goods in the hands of producers and middlemen. There were many instances during the war wheré such knowledge had to be obtained at whatever cost. Similar knowledge, covering a broader field, would render possible a wiser conduct of business operations, and would help to make our whole economic organization more efficient.

It is conceivable that at reasonable intervals there might be a complete census of American business establishments, including manufacturing, along with merchandising and other business activities. In that event, more frequent inquiries might be made into such matters as manufacturing product and mercantile stocks and turnovers.

With respect to these possible developments the Committee thus far has expressed no opinion. It mentions them here in order to suggest the scope and importance of the problem, and it invites suggestions, whether constructive or critical. On the general proposal that there should be, in some form or other, inquiries into commodity stocks, the Committee has expressed itself affirmatively in Recommendation #90, to be found appended to this Report.

A record of the activities of the Bureau of the Census during the past year in connection with the Fourteenth Census is presented herewith as Appendix II. Your Committee believes that this narrative of census work together with the similar statement presented last year will be of much value in connection with future census work.

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December 1, 1921